



# FIRST THINGS FIRST

TO: First Things First Regional Coordinators

First Things First Regional Managers

FROM: Liz Barker Alvarez

RE: Recommendations for FY2010 Communications Strategies

## **Public Affairs Plan Update**

At the February 4 Chairs and Vice Chairs meeting, the Communications Office presented a status update on the 3-5 year First Things First Public Affairs Plan. This integrated, comprehensive plan will move FTF forward with using research-based messaging and tactics across areas including Community Awareness, Government Affairs, Media Relations and Marketing. The research that will inform the strategies outlined in the plan has been completed, and final development of the plan will continue over the next several weeks.

On April 24, 2010, the Communications team will present to the FTF Board the 3-5 year Public Affairs Plan – including the specific tactics that will continue to be implemented over the course of the next 18 months. The April presentation will include a menu of options that Regional Partnership Councils can choose to invest in to ensure the success of FTF's public affairs efforts.

## **Current Statewide Strategies**

There are several strategies that FTF is implementing NOW that will continue to build public awareness of FTF and the importance of investing in early childhood. These strategies complement and lay the foundation for the more comprehensive Public Affairs Plan.

On a statewide level, those strategies include:

- **Executive Director Community Visits** – Beginning in March and continuing over the next six months, FTF Executive Director Rhian Evans Allvin will visit each of the Regional Partnership Council areas to: observe first-hand some of the strategies being funded by FTF; thank regional council members, staff and grantees for their role in implementing First Things First in their community; and, highlight to local stakeholders – including local policymakers, reporters and editorial boards- the significant community investment and impact of FTF.
- **Proposition 203 Supporter Check-In** – Director Allvin and members of the Board will have meetings with or do presentations for the organizations that supported Proposition 203.
- **Policymaker Outreach** – Director Allvin will meet with key legislative leaders to update them on First Things First.

We will engage Regional Council members in these meetings as much as possible, their schedules permitting.

**Earned Media** – We will engage in targeted media outreach around early childhood dates or FTF deliverables, such as the Week of the Young Child in April, Mother’s Day in May and the launch of the initial Quality First ratings in late summer.

**Social Media** – On February 8, we launched the First Things First Facebook page as another tool to help the public learn about First Things First and the importance of investing in early childhood. In the first week, we had acquired more than 150 fans! You can become a fan of FTF **from your home computer** by visiting:

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Phoenix-AZ/First-Things-First/439899815051> . You can also send the link to the FTF Facebook page.

### **Proposed Regional Communications Strategies to Complement Statewide Effort**

Two strategies have been identified that align with FTF’s immediate statewide efforts.

#### **Regional Strategy #1 – Community Outreach Presentations**

Support for long-term, sustained investment in early childhood has to be a grassroots effort. Local communities have the greatest stake in this investment because the bulk of FTF monies benefit local children directly. Think of how early childhood investment would look in Arizona if everyone – from local school board members and child care providers to members of the Kiwanis Club and the chamber of commerce all knew about and supported First Things First!

The Community Outreach presentations are designed to provide a 15-minute overview of FTF, the impact of FTF statewide, and what Regional Councils are doing in their communities to help children arrive at school healthy and ready to succeed.

As local leaders, Regional Council members are the most knowledgeable, credible voices for community outreach on FTF in their communities. Information from strangers to the community will be disregarded, but the same information from a Regional Council Member carries much more weight.

Because we recognize and value the time Regional Council Members already devote to the work of FTF, several tools have been designed to make delivery of Community Outreach presentations as easy as possible. The **Tools to Help** include:

- **Customizable Power Point Presentation:** This presentation includes talking points that reflect our recent research and message testing. There are several slides containing statewide information, but also slides that can be customized with local strategies and success stories. The presentation is available on the FTF Intranet at: <http://ftf/teams/communication/default.aspx> under the heading Most Popular. Based on your feedback, this presentation will be continuously improved. A list of potential groups to approach about providing a Community Outreach Presentation is included in Attachment A.
- **Training sessions** will be held in Phoenix, Tucson, Flagstaff and Casa Grande for Regional Council members, Board members or FTF staff who would like some tips on meeting with policymakers, working with the media or presenting to groups. The Phoenix trainings will be Web cast, so they can be viewed at the local FTF office. We will also videotape the Phoenix training, in case anyone would like to view it at another time. The dates/locations of the seminars are listed below. Email [lcastro@azftf.gov](mailto:lcastro@azftf.gov) to sign up to attend a seminar.
  - \*Seminar 1 – Phoenix, February 25, 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.; First Things First Board Room, 4000 North Central Avenue
  - \*Seminar 2 – Phoenix, February 25, 1:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.; First Things First Board Room, 4000 North Central Avenue

- Seminar 3 – Tucson, February 26, 9:30 to 12:30 p.m.; City of Tucson Sentinel Building, Pantano Room, 320 North Commerce Park Loop Road
- Seminar 4 – Tucson, February 26, 1:30 to 4:30 p.m.; United Way of Tucson and Southern Arizona, 330 North Commerce Park Loop Road
- Seminar 5 – Flagstaff, March 11, 9 a.m. to noon - TBA
- Seminar 6 – Flagstaff, March 11, 1 p.m. to 4 p.m.; United Way of Northern Arizona, 1515 East Cedar Avenue
- Seminar 7 – Phoenix, March 12, 9 a.m. to noon; First Things First Board Room, 4000 North Central
- Seminar 8 – Casa Grande, March 12, 1:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. - TBA
- **Palm Cards** have been designed as a leave-behind. When you do a presentation, or just talk to someone about First Things First, you can leave them this card with a few key points. The design of the card lets them keep one, and give another to a friend, thereby multiplying our outreach. Each chair, vice chair, coordinator and manager has been provided with 25 palm cards. Please contact [lcastro@azftf.gov](mailto:lcastro@azftf.gov) to order additional quantities.
- **Online Storybanking** will be available on the Intranet by February 26 and on the Web site by early March. This is a critical tool that helps us tell the FTF story in the words of those most affected by early childhood investment: Arizona's children and families. These personal stories add depth and color to outreach presentations, media stories or meetings with policymakers. Because the form to collect the stories will be available on the Web, any stakeholder – from families receiving services, grantees providing services, or FTF regional council members and employees – can submit a success story. Please see Attachment B for additional details on storybanking.

## Regional Strategy #2 – Building Parent Awareness of the Importance of Early Childhood

The Communications Office has identified a host of materials to complement regional parent awareness or education efforts. The materials – from Born Learning – reflect the most current early childhood development research and best practice. And, they can easily be branded First Things First. Because of this, they actually achieve two goals: first and foremost, they provide useful information to parents about the importance of early childhood; secondly, they help our community recognize FTF as a provider of early childhood information.

There are media materials – such as radio spots and billboards – as well as flyers, posters and give-aways. Attachment C provides details on the materials available, the costs of producing those materials, and questions to guide regional councils in determining which materials would enhance their local parent awareness efforts. In addition, samples of the materials are available on the FTF Intranet at: <http://ftf/teams/communication/default.aspx> under the heading Most Popular. This document may take some time to load on your computer because of all the graphics on the materials.

Because of state procurement requirements, FTF is limited in the total dollar amount of materials that can be printed, so we ask that regional councils consider carefully the amount of materials that they can actually distribute prior to ordering.

In addition, how much air time can be purchased for radio spots is determined by the local costs, but also by the amount of airtime purchased. We encourage regions in the same geographic areas to “pool” the resources they are planning to commit to Born Learning radio spots so that the maximum amount of airtime can be purchased with those resources.

We recognize that Born Learning may not meet the needs of all regional councils, including the specific cultural needs of our Tribal Regions. These materials are merely a starting point for our efforts to support FTF's parent awareness and education strategies, at the statewide and regional level. We will continue to work with members of the Tribal Technical Assistance Group (T-TAG) to identify other materials to supplement Born Learning that are culturally relevant to our Tribal partners.

### **Building Communications Capacity within the Regions**

The Regional Councils play a critical role in the success of any communications effort. Scheduling and coordinating community outreach presentations, engaging local media and effectively distributing parent awareness materials are critical, but time-consuming tasks. While each regional council could likely use help with these tasks, it is not a full-time job on a region-to-region basis at this time.

Regional councils may want to invest some of their communications resources into hiring local communications consultants to assist with these tasks over the next several months. A scope of work for the positions is included in Attachment D. Moses Anshell, the consulting firm working with FTF on the Strategic Public Affairs Plan, will train, hire and manage the regional communications consultants to ensure consistency of communications statewide. Regional councils should suggest local consultants they feel may meet the region's needs, although Moses Anshell will have final authority over whether the individuals suggested meet the qualifications and can perform all of the tasks required for the amount FTF is able to invest.

### **Next Steps**

The Board will be discussing release of FY 2010 regional funds set aside for Communications at its February 23 meeting. If the Board approves the release of the funds for the aforementioned or any other Communications strategies, additional guidance will be sent out.

Attachment A: Community Outreach Presentation Target List

Attachment B: Storybanking Background

Attachment C: Born Learning Materials

Attachment D: Scope of Work

## Attachment A

### Community Presentation Target List

The goal of our Community Outreach Presentation strategy is to reach as many groups as possible with information about First Things First and its impact in local communities. The list below is intended to guide regional councils in those efforts. In determining WHICH groups to target, the following questions can be used:

- Which groups can we easily schedule presentations with because we have a personal connection to them (perhaps they are FTF grantees, regional council members may sit on their boards or know someone who does, etc)?
- Which groups are involved in educational or health issues (since these are the two main target areas of FTF)?
- Which groups are known as champions for children and families in our community?

Once you have selected a group to target, the following questions can be used to determine WHO should present information to the group:

- Who already has a relationship to the group?
- Who would the group see as a credible messenger (for example, a hospital board may see the health representative on a regional council as a more credible messenger, since they “speak the same language”)?

#### **Local Elected Leaders**

- City Council
- Tribal Council
- Board of Supervisors

#### **Educational Groups**

- Local school board (s)
- Local parent/teacher association (s)
- Teacher’s union(s)
- Local community college board(s)

#### **Health Groups**

- Local hospital foundations/boards
- Physician’s associations

#### **Business Groups**

- Chamber of Commerce
- Small business association

- Other local business groups
- Unions
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#### **Civic Groups / Non-Profits**

- Kiwanis Clubs
- Lyons Clubs
- Rotary Clubs
- Knights of Columbus
- Soroptimists
- Junior League
- League of Women Voters
- Local philanthropies / community foundations
- Community development groups

#### **Faith Groups**

- Councils of churches
- Church leaders

## **Attachment B**

### **Story Banking Guidelines**

#### **What is a story bank?**

A story bank is a collection of narratives outlining the experiences of individuals and their connection to specific services/programs.

#### **Why build a story bank?**

To help make programs or policy issues understandable to a broader group of individuals such as reporters, policymakers or the community/stakeholders at large. Policy makers often request testimony from individuals during legislative hearings to highlight the need to create new or to change existing legislation or justification to increase/decrease/maintain funding. Reporters rely on anecdotes to illustrate/better understand an issue that they are reporting on and/or persuade readers to take a position on that issue.

#### **Potential impact of the story bank**

Although maintaining a story bank is challenging and time consuming, it has the potential to do the following:

- Be a powerful tool to help protect funding and enhance public perception regarding a particular issue.
- Help to justify an organization as a resource for the media, other advocates, and policy makers.
- Have at the ready anecdotes drawn from the story bank at your own events and in reports or statements you release.
- Provide a persuasive and real-world way in which to enhance and illustrate your arguments to justify issues of funding and/or general support.

#### **How do you begin to build a story bank?**

Choose a story that reflects the following:

- 1) A best practice or highly effective/successful program that provides an understandable and direct benefit to the everyday lives of children and/or their families.
- 2) A story that pulls on the heart strings of the community/reporters/public officials and that reflect the necessity of funding/programs.

Once you identify the stories that fit the above referenced components, the following information must be gathered.

First, from the Regional Partnership Council gather (and maintain) specific data about the RPC:

- 1) Annual budget
- 2) Portion of that budget that is dedicated to direct services to children and families.
- 3) How many individuals were served in 2009.
- 4) How many individuals are expected to be served in 2010,

- 5) Three specific examples of what would occur to children and families if funding was cut or eliminated.

Then from the children/family related to the potential story gather specific information about the story:

- 1) Name of the child and/or family and their contact information
- 2) A short description (4-5 sentences) regarding the best practice (i.e. Quality Rating System), including the FTF program/service (Quality First), how that program has made their life better, with a 1-2 sentence comparison to similar programs in other states.
- 3) Categorize each story within one of the following categories:
  - Supporting families (Parent Kit, home visitation)
  - Health (oral health, early screening, etc.)
  - Early Care and Education (literacy, child care, etc.)
  - Other
- 3) Secure permission from the family of the children to utilize their story. \*Obtain an signed consent for each story
- 4) Engage the family to explain why you are utilizing their story and answer any questions they might have.
- 5) Ensure each family understands the services they are receiving/information they are accessing (i.e. parent kits, etc) are funded by FTF.
- 6) Ask them why they believe these services are so important and what would occur if they did not have access to these services.
- 7) Record this Q&A on paper for story bank.

### **Goals for Recording Stories:**

While recording a story, portrayals should be:

#### **Personal and sympathetic**

To make a story more compelling, personal details are important. The following questions must be asked of all story bank participants to help make a story more real: how long they've worked at their present job; how much they spend out of pocket for health/mental health care and child care for their children; the number of children in the family and their ages?

#### **Concise and memorable**

You must record specific information beyond the basics (i.e.: why are these services important?). Instead, it should focus on specifics. Ask each participant the following questions: why are these FTF-funded services important to them how have they impacted you/children (i.e. what it has meant to have a highly trained and stable professional working with your child), what would occur if these services were eliminated, what would you say to those who want to take away these services?

### Credible

It is best if reporters, policymakers, and the general public can easily understand the real world impact of your programs and services. People that reflect this are key to building a successful story bank that is persuasive to multiple audiences. Most often, people will listen to a story in which they can see similarities between the person involved and themselves or their own family members.

### Diverse

It is best to have many different people tell stories about the same program/service. While the majority of the stories will and should focus on those benefitting directly from FTF-funded programs each initiative could be described from different vantage points. For example, oral health care could have stories from Dentists who provide care, children who receive care, teachers who've seen a difference in a child, parents who have seen their child's overall health improve and their out-of-pocket costs for dental-related problems decrease, etc.

### **Maintaining your story bank:**

- Collect 3-5 stories for each service category PER REGION. Be sure to gather new stories each quarter and that they reflect the racial, ethnic, gender, religion, etc. diversity of the state.
- Maintain monthly communication with families that provide stories to ensure the information remains accurate.
- Refresh the data of each story on a regular basis to ensure it is current.



## Attachment D

### Outreach and Awareness Coordinator – Scope of Work

Winning tactic: 4 month consultant contracts

First Things First Communications is exploring options for increasing resources and internal capacity to support the outreach efforts of all First Thing First staff, Board and Regional Partnership Council members.

Among the options is an opportunity for Regional Partnerships to fund Outreach and Awareness Coordinators, one in each regional area, whose sole function would be to coordinate, staff and project manage the outreach efforts identified by the FTF Communications Office that Regional Partnership Councils choose to participate in. Recommended: 6 Regional Area Coordinators, 1 Coordinator dedicated to working with the Tribal Regions.

#### Scope of Work:

*In alignment with the strategic communications plan, and in collaboration with First Things First central office Communications Staff:*

- Actively develop community outreach activities/programs by evaluating needs of the general public and community groups, identify opportunities and prepare any staff (scheduling, materials prep) or volunteer to present on FTF
- Coordinate, prepare materials for, and staff Executive Director visits
- Maximize any Board meetings held locally through efforts to be determined
- Public relations efforts: craft press releases, create and pitch stories to local press utilizing stories collected, identify other opportunities
- Facilitate any distribution of materials, research, etc for media buying
- Maintains records on visits, prepares monthly and quarterly reports, shared success stories
- Other activities TBD

We estimate the costs associated with hiring outreach consultants at approximately \$15,000 per region. At this rate, we will be able to hire one full-time equivalent consultant per regional area to assist with these tasks over the next four months.

Because we recognize the limited resources of our Tribal Regions, FTF will assume the cost of one coordinator to work with the ten Tribal regions that agree to move forward with this strategy.

We recognize that there may be circumstances and nuances (geographic area, travel, etc.)--we will work with individual councils to work through those nuances. The more regional councils that buy into this strategy, the more options First Things First will have in apportioning workload to ensure that the needs of all the participating regional councils are met.